

SWIFT FOX NEWS

Newsletter No. 4 of the Swift Fox Conservation Team
September 2003

Comments from Team Leader

This is the fourth newsletter of the Swift Fox Conservation Team (SFCT) since the group's formation in 1994. The SFCT is comprised of representatives from state wildlife agencies within the historic range of the swift fox and members of federal and private wildlife and land management agencies. The SFCT was organized to respond to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service finding that the swift fox was warranted for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act. Member states and agencies have worked cooperatively on swift fox monitoring, management, and research that provided new information that supported species removal from the Candidate List in 2001. However, the Team's primary mission of ensuring the long-term conservation of swift fox still remains. The Team holds open annual meetings and produces an annual report that includes updates on monitoring efforts and research projects.

Inside this newsletter, you will find project updates, accomplishments, and items of note. An exciting announcement is the publication and release of a new book entitled "The Swift Fox: Ecology and Conservation of Swift Foxes in a Changing World". See inside for more information and for newly updated web sites. The Team hopes you find this newsletter useful and appreciates your support.

Jacquie Ermer
SFCT Leader (2003-2004)



All the photos are by Lu Carbyn

Updates

Colorado Division of Wildlife

Swift fox are present throughout most of their historic range in Colorado and have maintained a stable to increasing population over the past few decades. The Colorado Division of Wildlife is working with Colorado State University on an expanded monitoring program that will utilize a mark-recapture method. The monitoring program will encompass eastern agricultural lands. Monitoring results may provide information regarding the impact of recent drought on swift fox.

Contact: Francie Pusateri

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Swift fox are present throughout most of their historic range in Kansas and have maintained a stable to increasing population over the past few decades. In recent times, track surveys have been used in Kansas to estimate swift fox distribution, abundance, and trends. A small number of swift fox are legally harvested annually. *Contact: Matt Peek*

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

The swift fox was considered extirpated from Montana until 1978, which marked the beginning of a series of reported sightings and collected specimens in the eastern part of the state. In 1996 a resident, reproducing population was documented in the north-central portion of Montana, which was most likely established from individuals dispersing from a Canadian reintroduction program. Recent evidence indicates population is continuing to expand to the south and east. Monitoring activities include a population census in conjunction with Canada during the winter of

2000-2001 and a statewide swift fox distribution survey utilizing track and sign searches that was completed during 2002. A reintroduction project on the Blackfeet Reservation was recently undertaken with animals being monitored (see Blackfeet Reservation). *Contact: Brian Giddings*

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Swift fox are present in the western portion of their historic range in Nebraska. The population appears to be stable to declining over the past few decades. Track surveys were completed in 2002. However, soil conditions and access issues limited the amount of information obtained. The next survey effort will likely combine scent stations with track surveys. *Contact: Richard Bischof*

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

Swift fox are present throughout most of their historic range in New Mexico. The population appears to be stable over the past few decades. Swift fox hybridize with the closely related kit fox in the Trans-Pecos region of the State. Scat surveys have been used to inventory populations. The protocol for this survey method is currently being refined. A small number of swift fox are legally harvested annually.

Contact: Terry Enk

North Dakota Game and Fish Department

There are currently no known populations of swift fox in North Dakota. Track surveys were completed in 35 quarter sections in 2002 to determine the presence/absence of swift fox. Track surveys are conducted every three years.. *Contact: Jacquie Ermer*

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Swift fox are present in the western portion of their historic range in Oklahoma. The population appears to be stable over the past few decades. Track surveys will be conducted in 2003. Habitat maps are being developed in conjunction with survey results.

Contact: Julianne Whitaker Hoagland

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks

Swift fox are present in the southwestern portion of their historic range in South Dakota. The population appears to be stable to declining over the past few decades. A reintroduction project was recently initiated at Bad River Ranches (see Turner Endangered Species Fund). Reintroduction planning is underway at Badlands National Park (see US National Park Service). Field surveys, including scent stations, were completed in 2001 in Fall River County. *Contact: Eileen Dowd Stukel*

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Swift fox are present in the northernmost portion of their historic range in Texas. The population appears to be stable to declining over the past few decades and much reduced in range. A small number of swift fox are legally harvested annually. *Contact: Heather Whitlaw*

**Wyoming Game and Fish Department**

Swift fox are present throughout most of their historic range in Wyoming. The population appears to be stable to increasing over the past few decades. Annual monitoring using track plates is being conducted. In August and September, 2002, 30 swift fox were trapped in southeastern Wyoming for release at Bad River Ranches in South Dakota (see Turner Endangered Species Fund).

Contact: Martin Grenier

Canadian Wildlife Service

In the 1930s the swift fox was considered extirpated from its range in southern Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. A reintroduction program began in 1983 and swift fox were released annually through 1998. The current population in Canada is reproducing and appears to be stable. *Contact: Steve Brechtel*

US Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Swift fox are not targets of any control activities by APHIS. Any incidental take during other activities is reported. An estimated 24 animals were lost to incidental take in the past 10 years. Most take is from the restricted use of M44s. *Contact: Jeffrey Green*

USGS Biological Resources Division

Northern Prairie Research Center in North Dakota has been active in swift fox conservation and research for several years. A habitat use database is being developed and maintained for use by the Swift Fox Conservation Team. An extensive bibliography including 403 citations is available at <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/1999/swif/tlit/swiflit.htm>.

Contact: Marsha Sovada

US Bureau of Land Management

Swift fox occur on BLM lands in Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming. Survey work is being conducted on some BLM lands in Montana. Swift Fox Conservation Team members are working with the appropriate BLM offices to provide updated swift fox information for consideration during Resource Management Plan revisions. *Contact: Julie Moore*

US Fish and Wildlife Service

In 1995, the Service designated the swift fox as a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act. State wildlife agencies within the historic range of the species formed the Swift Fox Conservation Team to work cooperatively on swift fox management and conservation. As a result of these efforts in part, the swift fox was removed from the candidate list in 2001. The Service remains interested in the species' status and participates in Swift Fox Conservation Team activities. *Contact: Pete Gober*

USDA Forest Service

Swift fox occur on Forest Service lands (National Grasslands) in most States within the historic range of the species. Fort Pierre National Grassland in South Dakota is cooperating with Turner Endangered Species Fund regarding the Turner reintroduction effort at Bad River Ranches, adjacent to Fort Pierre National Grassland. *Contact: Bob Hodorff*

US National Park Service

No resident swift fox are known to occur in National Parks. Badlands National Park, South Dakota is in the planning stages of a reintroduction program. An Environmental Assessment that investigates the potential impacts of a reintroduction program is undergoing public comment. *Contact: Dan Licht*

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe in central South Dakota is planning a grant application for submittal to the US Fish and Wildlife Service to support reintroducing swift fox. *Contact: Matt Lewis*

Turner Endangered Species Fund

In Fall of 2002, 20 swift fox were released at Bad River Ranches, South Dakota. An additional 10 fox will be released in the Summer of 2003. All fox were tested for disease and radio-collared. Approximately 30 animals will be released annually for 6 consecutive years. All animals were trapped in southeastern Wyoming under an agreement with Wyoming Game and Fish Department. *Contact: Kevin Honness*

Blackfeet Reservation

A partnership between the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, the Cochrane Institute in Canada, and Defenders of Wildlife resulted in swift fox releases from 1998-2002. A total of 122 animals were released. All animals came from the Cochrane facility. Breeding has been documented every year since 1999. *Contact: Ira Newbreast*

Recent Swift Fox Management Chronology

February 1992	Petition to list swift fox filed by Jon C. Sharps
February 1993	Swift Fox Status Review Symposium, Medicine Hat, Alberta
June 1994	Federal Register Notice of 90-day petition finding - positive
December 1994	Habitat Conservation Assessment & Strategy - draft #1
December 1994	Swift Fox Conservation Team formed
June 1995	Fed. Reg. Notice of 12-month petition finding - warranted but precluded
1995	Annual Report of Swift Fox Conservation Team
September 1995	Annual Swift Fox Conservation Team Meeting, Denver, CO
1996	Annual Report of Swift Fox Conservation Team
December 1996	Annual Swift Fox Conservation Team Meeting, Omaha, NE
1997	Annual Report and Newsletter No. 1 of Swift Fox Conservation Team
1997	Final Conservation Assessment and Conservation Strategy
September 1997	Annual Swift Fox Conservation Team Meeting, Aspen, CO
1998	Annual Report of Swift Fox Conservation Team
1998	Blackfeet Reservation, MT swift fox releases initiated
February 1998	Swift Fox Symposium, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
December 1998	Annual Swift Fox Conservation Team Meeting, Amarillo, TX
1983-99	Canadian swift fox releases
1999	Annual Report of Swift Fox Conservation Team
November 1999	Annual Swift Fox Conservation Team Meeting, Phoenix, AZ
2000	Annual Report and Newsletter No. 2 of Swift Fox Conservation Team
January 2000	Annual Swift Fox Conservation Team Meeting, Albuquerque, NM
January 2001	Swift fox removed from Federal list of Candidate Species
2001	Annual Report of Swift Fox Conservation Team
October 2001	Annual Swift Fox Conservation Team Meeting, Rapid City, SD
Sept/Oct 2002	Swift fox reintroduction - Bad River Ranches, SD (Turner)
September 2002	Annual Swift Fox Conservation Team Meeting, Bismarck, ND
2002	Swift Fox Conservation Team Newsletter No. 3
2003	Swift Fox Conservation Team Newsletter No. 4

Items of Note

Meeting Notice

The 2003 Swift Fox Conservation Team Meeting will be September 16 in conjunction with the Grassland Symposium and the Prairie Dog Conservation Team Meeting. The Meeting will be at the USGS Office in Fort Collins, CO. Contact Franci Pusateri, Colorado Division of Wildlife (francie.pusateri@state.co.us).

USDA Forest Service

Rocky Mountain Research Station

The Rocky Mountain Research Station at Rapid City, South Dakota has published two new publications:

Uresk, D.W., K. E. Severson and J. Javersak. 2003. Vegetative Characteristics of Swift Fox Denning and Foraging Sites in Southwestern South Dakota. Res. Pap. RMRS-RP-38. Ogden, UT: USDA, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 4 p.

Uresk, D.W., K.E. Severson, and J. Javersak. 2003. Detecting Swift Fox: Smoke-plate Scent Stations Versus Spotlighting. Res. Pap. RMRS-RP-39. Ogden, UT: USDA, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 6 p.

The Research Station would like to resample the Ardmore study area and complete the habitat study, but no funds are available right now. *Contact: Daniel Uresk*

The NatureServe website

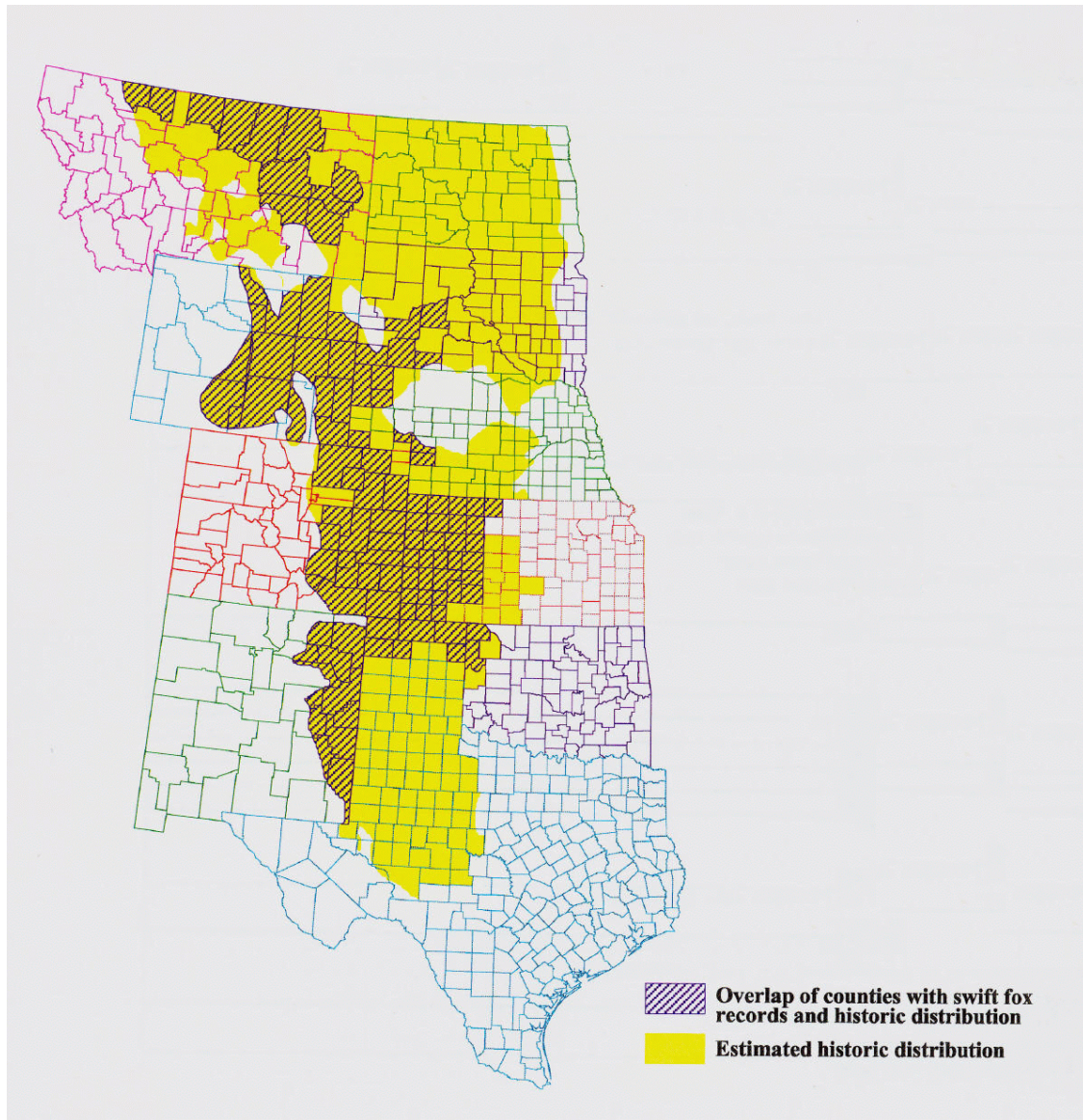
(<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>) has been updated with regard to swift fox status under the Endangered Species Act. The text under "Comments on official statuses" states that "populations in Canada listed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as Endangered on June 2, 1970 (Federal Register 35:8491-8498) under 'VULPES VELOX HEBES,' a subspecies regarded in recent studies as unworthy of recognition. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Federal Register, 16 June 1995, p. 31663) determined that listing of U.S. populations was warranted but precluded by other actions of higher priority (endangered status in Canada still applies). U.S. populations deleted from Candidate list on October 20, 2001 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2001)."

New Book Coming Soon

A new book entitled "The Swift Fox: Ecology and Conservation of Swift Foxes in a Changing World," will be available mid-August. The book addresses aspects of both swift fox biology and management. The book will retail for \$34.95. The book is being published by the Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina (306) 585-4795.



Recent (1995-2000) Swift Fox Records in the United States



This map is a product of the swift fox habitat use database developed and maintained by USGS. This information was integral to the decision to remove the species from the Candidate List and continues to provide evidence regarding the status of the swift fox. Please send information regarding recent records of swift fox distribution to Marsha Sovada at marsha_sovada@usgs.gov.

Sources for Additional Information

Several websites provide good starting points for finding additional information. **The USGS Biological Resources Division's** Northern Prairie Research Center in North Dakota is an excellent source for existing and ongoing swift fox research

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/1999/swiflit/swiflit.htm>.

The **US Fish and Wildlife Service** has several documents available for downloading as well as links to other sites <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/mammals/swiftfox/>

Additionally, information regarding a variety of Fish and Wildlife Service natural resource assistance grants is available at <http://grants.fws.gov>.

Check the **South Dakota US Fish and Wildlife** web site in the future for obtaining swift fox newsletters, annual reports, federal documents, etc. The annual reports are being scanned to a PDF format and will be available on this website as soon as they are finished (some are there now!).

http://southdakotafieldoffice.fws.gov/swift_fox_main.htm

The Swift Fox Conservation Team was formed in 1994 in response to the US Fish & Wildlife Service 90-day petition finding for the swift fox. Activities are directed by an annually rotating chairperson. For 2003, the chairperson is Jacquie Ermer, North Dakota Game & Fish Department. Her email address is jermer@state.nd.us.

Swift and/or kit fox bibliographies are available at <http://www.wildlifer.com/foxrefs.html>

A newsletter for the **Turner Endangered Species Fund Swift Fox Project** can be found on their website at <http://tesf.org/newsletter/swiftfox-2001-11.pdf>

